DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 049 675 HE 002 059

AUTHOR Richardson, Elliot L.
TITLE Toward a Federal Policy for Higher Education.
INSTITUTION Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 11 Nov 70
NOTE 16p.; Address before the 84th Annual Convention of the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges, Washington, D.C., November 11, 1970

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Equal Education, *Federal Aid, Federal Government, Financial Problems, *Financial Support, *Higher Education

ABSTRACT

The 1960's were a time of constantly growing federal support for higher education, a trend which has not continued into the 1970's. From a feeling that the university could do no wrong, there is now a sense of public disenchantment. The growth of university revenues has slowed, students are disinterested and even alienated, and there is a sense of crisis. Financial problems are increasing as enrollments continue to increase, and it appears that universities have lost their sense of mission. Reforms are needed and it is the responsibility of the Federal government and higher education jointly to resolve some of the problems. Foremost are the financial problems facing the universities. In coping with these problems the Federal government will be guided by at least 4 basic principles: (1) the responsibility to equalize opportunity for all Americans to receive a higher education; (2) Federal support for diversity in higher education; (3) Federal support for an enhancement of the independence of colleges and universities; and (4) the need to determine Federal support of higher education in the light of national needs for the skills that higher education produces. (AF)

ED049675

FOR RELEASE ON DELIVERY
11:00 A.M. EST

THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20201

Toward a Federal Policy for Higher Education

An Address by the

HONORABLE ELLIOT L. RICHARDSON

Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare

before the

National Association of State Universities

and Land Grant Colleges

84th Annual Convention

Shoreham Hotel

Washington, D.C.

November 11, 1970

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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I am very happy to be here today to examine with you the old and fruitful relationship between the Federal government on the one hand and our institutions of higher education on the other.

I must add -- I'm delighted with the opportunity to give my first address on higher education to this particular association. We all know the great part land-grant colleges and universities have played in the astonishing progress of higher education in our country. Over the years the institutions you represent have responded magnificently to the changing needs of our society and have had a significant impact on our Nation. I note that in a recent study of the quality of graduate education by Alan Cartter, members of this oldest of all higher education associations emerged with ratings in the top ten, both as to the quality of graduate faculty and the effectiveness of graduate programs, in discipline after discipline, from classics to mechanical engineering.

Almost 100 years after the passage of the Morrill Act -- which was your own genesis -- President Eisenhower in 1958 approved the National Defense Education Act.

Having myself played a role in the formulation of that legislation, I can only report in retrospect how satisfying it is to view the results. President Eisenhower's action ushered in a decade of dramatically enlarged Federal support for higher education during the 1960's. In this brief 10-year period, while the Congress was enacting more programs and appropriating more dollars for higher education than in all our previous history, the need for this support was accentuated by the doubling of our college and university student population -- from three to six million. This was more of an increase than had taken place in the preceding 300 years.

Indeed, I could easily go on at some length about the achievements of your member institutions. And but a few short years ago, your outstanding successes would have been an appropriate theme for my address. But there is a widespread feeling now that the complacency implicit in such a theme is out of place. Now there is a sense of crisis. The growth of university revenues has slowed. Students are disinterested. Some are alienated. A few are in open revolt. Political issues have mobilized campus groups for purposes not particularly those of the university.

public confidence in our colleges and universities has been shaken.

Thus, in thinking about the Federal government and higher education, we are forced to think not of past successes but of problems and challenges of the future. There is, to begin, the problem of finance -- and associated with this, the challenges of growth. The Carnegie Commission on Higher Education has reported on the needs of higher education institutions in compelling detail, and I needn't cite them to you. Unlike elementary and secondary education, higher education is still going through a period of rapidly increasing enrollment, and in all probability will continue to do so for at least the next decade. Who will finance this growth -- and how?

At the same time, we confront a range of problems which might be called the challenge of reform. Many have commented on this challenge, but none has done so as eloquently, or with such public attention, as the Scranton Commission. The conclusions and suggestions of the Commission have received my closest scrutiny, and will continue to be reviewed at the highest levels of government.

Needless to say, the recommendations are also directed to you.....and I commend them to your attention.

The Commission reports that universities have lost their sense of mission, partly as a consequence of sheer size, partly as a result of involvement in activities peripheral to the central functions of teaching and research. It also comments on extraordinary shifts in student attitudes and values, and of the desperate need for new styles of teaching and learning to meet the range of students who now seek higher education. In brief, an educational format appropriate for an elite may not be appropriate for a country in which over 50 percent of our youth are now enrolling in college. How will these needed reforms be made? To what extent is this the business of the Federal government?

I refer to the great unresolved questions we face regarding the role higher education should play in the lives of our citizens. Most of the problems we commonly identify are problems which confront the existing institutions of higher education. But the most basic issue for us today is not what do our institutions of higher education

require, but what kind of higher education does our society require? How much education should be made available at public expense? Should our colleges serve only the young? When in an individual's life can he profit most from the benefits a higher education will bring?

Against the background of such challenges and large questions as these, the Federal government and higher education must jointly resolve a number of complex issues. Most immediately, we must determine the extent and causes of financial need among various institutions, particularly the differing needs and problems of public and private institutions. We must come to grips with the impact which various forms of support will have on your institutions; and we must assess the question of how the support we provide will affect the broad need for change and reform I've already mentioned. None of these issues submits to easy analysis.

As some of you know, I have already begun to discuss these issues with representatives of various higher education organizations. What I would like to do today is to share with you some principles which I hope will guide these discussions. None of us know now where our discussions

will lead.....but I think we can agree on the basic parameters within which they should occur. Beyond that, I should think we might agree on certain courses of action which seem squarely in line with these principles.

The first of these is that the Federal government has a unique responsibility to equalize opportunity for all Americans to receive a higher education. In the 1960's we made great strides toward the ideal of equal opportunity for all. I say now that to continue this advance should be our foremost objective in the 1970's.

A young person whose family earns more than $15,000 a year is today nine times more likely to attend college than a young person whose family earns less than $3,000. Moreover, as you are aware, some groups in our society have opportunities much less equal than others. While Black Americans have made significant gains in college enrollments in recent years, they still fall far short of what they should be, given the numbers of Black Americans of college-age. And--a real shocker--of the 26,100 students who received doctoral degrees in 1968, fewer than one percent were Black.

I needn't continue with these depressing statistics. The point is obvious. Despite the efforts and advances of recent years, we are still a long way from achieving equality of opportunity for education beyond the high school.

In addressing himself to this situation, President Nixon said:

"No qualified student who wants to go to college should be barred for lack of money. That has long been an American goal; I propose that we achieve it now."

The President has advocated reforms in the Federal student financial aid program that would give every low-income student the same ability to pay for his college education as a student from a family earning $10,000 a year. The President's proposals would greatly expand student grant programs for students from low-income families, and they would provide subsidized loan funds to meet the remainder of these students' needs. This program will go into effect when and if Congress enacts the proposed Higher Education Opportunity Act.

My Administration colleague, Pat Moynihan, has expressed his bewilderment that this bold new Presidential initiative has been given such a cold reception by the higher education community. Since assuming office I have reviewed the proposal and have concluded that the basic reforms of student assistance it entails are eminently sound and sensible, and exciting in the results they will bring. I share Pat's concern that this proposal receive your close attention and support.

As part of my review, I have considered the concerns expressed by a number of you that the initial proposal gave insufficient attention to the need to base student assistance on the cost of education as well as the family income of the student . I have also taken into account your concern that in finding new sources of support for National Defense Student Loans, we assure your institutions of a constant flow of funds. Both these concerns you have expressed seem to me to be legitimate and justified, and I believe we can satisfy both of them.

Assuming this is so, the decision on this crucial reform will then rest with you. Please note -- if the Bill is not passed early in the next session of Congress, over one million students will be deprived of the Federal support our proposal will bring.

For our part, before the legislation is passed, I have asked the Office of Education to institute administrative reforms so that the poorest students are the first to receive support under the Equal Opportunity Grant and Work Study programs.

All this is consistent with the principle of equalizing opportunity. A second principle, no less important, is that the Federal government should support diversity in higher education. This principle stems directly from the Federal concern with the welfare of <u>all</u> citizens.

This principle suggests that in our exercise over the coming months we must give particular attention to the differential needs of public and private institutions, and assure that our private higher educational system is healthy and viable. And beyond the question of whether an institution is public or private, we must give special attention to institutions which are performing distinctive missions, such as our Black colleges.

Recently, we have announced a plan to channel $30 million more to the Black colleges this fiscal year than had originally been allocated. The first step, award of additional College Work Study funds, has already been taken and announcement of awards under the Developing Institutions and facility loan and interest subsidy programs will be coming soon. We must, and will, do more.

The Federal interest in diversity also requires us, I believe, to develop in this Nation a strong and vigorous program of career education. Even with a system of strong public and private institutions, and strong special mission institutions such as Black colleges, we could fail the student who seeks something other than a liberal arts curriculum. We have now underway in HEW a review of federal options in the field of career education, and we will be discussing these with you soon.

A third principle is that the Federal government should support and enhance the independence of our colleges and universities. I would like to add that this principle strikes me as the most important of all, and the most difficult to achieve.

It means that the Federal government should not try, under any circumstances, to run institutions of higher education. This Administration has been uncompromising and unambiguous in its opposition to those who would have the Federal government assume responsibility for maintaining order on campus.

In the Higher Education message, President Nixon recalled that a year earlier he had stated two guidelines for relations of the Federal government to higher education:

"First, that universities and colleges are places of excellence in which men are judged by achievement and merit in a defined area.....

"Second.....that violence or the threat of violence may never be permitted to influence the actions or judgments of the university community."

The President then went on to say:

"I stated then, and I repeat now, that while outside influences, such as the Federal government, can act in such a way as to threaten those principles, there is relatively little they can do to guarantee them.....

"For that reason I have repeatedly resisted efforts to attach detailed requirements on such matters as student discipline to programs of higher education. In the first place they won't work, and if they did work they would in that very process destroy what they nominally seek to preserve."

A concern for the independence of higher education institutions, however, means more than knowing what not to do. It means that we must be increasingly self-conscious about what impact Federal support has had on the institutions themselves.

Not until the 1960's did we become aware of the enormous impact which the Federal government was having on higher education in the 50's and 40's. The decline of teaching, the growth of the multi-versity, and the loss of mission which the Scranton Commission describes are outstanding examples of the unintended consequences of Federal involvement. When we consider the issues of new forms of Federal support in the months ahead, we must study these lessons carefully.

Perhaps most important of all--and certainly most difficult--a concern for institutional independence must mean that we become self-conscious about how Federal activity in general affects our colleges and universities. As Pat Moynihan is fond of saying, programs are not policies. A Federal policy toward higher education would encompass the range of actions taken by the Federal government which affect higher education, whether intended or not. Thus, if we had a Federal policy toward higher education, surely we would have revised the selective service laws ten years before we did--laws which operated to maximize the uncertainty our young people felt about their future, laws which still drive young people into colleges for the wrong reasons, and, I might add, trap them there with predictably deleterious consequences for both student and institution.

A fourth principle, and the last I wish to mention today, is that the Federal government should determine its support of higher education in the light of national needs for the skills which higher education produces. This means that we must in the coming months examine the alleged surpluses in the production of PhD graduates in certain fields.

And we must urgently deal with the critically short supply of health manpower. We confront a shortage not only of doctors and nurses, but also of medical technologists, physical therapists, dental technicians, X-ray technicians -- all the medical professionals and para-professionals and allied health personnel who guard the health of our Nation. In all these disciplines, we must produce more numbers, more efficiently, with upgraded skills in shorter time than ever before.

Taken together, these principles should provide some guidelines for our discussions. Thus, <u>if</u> we can truly define what the problems of higher education are, <u>if</u> we can keep some such principles as these in mind when we consider the nature of the Federal effort which should be made toward solving these problems, and <u>if</u> we can indeed reach the kind of understandings I believe we must, I am confident that we can resolve the tough questions ahead.

If the President's Commission has formally reminded us that we live in a time of crisis, it has also reminded us of the contributions of your institutions to our Nation and to our civilization. And it is well to remember that the crises we face are those of burgeoning opportunity,

not of fundamental incapacity. The tasks you have undertaken for our society are immense--and you deserve our continued and conscious support.

Thank you very much.